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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 BELGRADE 000256

SIPDIS

E.O.12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SR](#) [YI](#)

SUBJECT: SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH PRINCIPLES FOR KOSOVO
STATUS NEGOTIATIONS

SUMMARY

1.(U) Following is the text of a document released by the Serbian Orthodox Church outlining its principles for the ongoing negotiations over the future status of Kosovo. The document was adopted by the Holy Synod of Bishops based upon decisions taken by the yearly Assembly of Bishops which met in November 2005. Disagreement among members of the SOC Council for Kosovo over the text has held up its release until now. The document outlines in general terms the Church's support for the Serbian negotiating team for Kosovo, supports "a special form of decentralization enabling the effective protection of the vital interests of the Serbian people," in line with the Serbian government and President Tadic's plans, calls for the restitution of church property confiscated by the state after 1945, and seeks international protection for living monastic communities. In addition, the document seeks the protection of the full rights of the SOC over its property in Kosovo, unhindered communication with the SOC, and the recognition of cultural monuments as the "Serbian cultural heritage of Kosovo and Metohija. A delegation of senior SOC clerics plans to visit Washington the latter half of March (septel). Text of the document follows. END SUMMARY.

2.(U) BEGIN TEXT OF DOCUMENT

Taking into account the decisions from this years autumn session of the SOC Holy Assembly of Bishops (November 1-4, 2005), the Holy Synod of Bishops and the Council for Kosovo and Metohija of the Holy Assembly of Bishops hereby define the following with regard to forthcoming talks on the future status of Kosovo and Metohija.

BASIC PRINCIPLES of the SOC Holy Synod of Bishops and the Council for Kosovo and Metohija of the Holy Assembly of Bishops with regard to forthcoming talks on the future status of Kosovo and Metohija:

1. In the process of resolving the future status of Kosovo and Metohija the Serbian Orthodox Church, her faithful and her Holy Shrines in the Province should be provided with adequate protection and a free life in accordance with basic principles of religious freedom and human rights generally accepted in the democratic world.

2. The position of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija should be regulated by a special form of decentralization enabling the effective protection of the vital interests of the Serbian people, especially in the areas of education, culture, media, health and social policy, economic and property issues, local police and judiciary. It is especially important to ensure the return of Serb refugees, their secure living conditions and lasting survival. Toward this end, the Serbian Orthodox Church gives its wholehearted support to the Negotiation Team on the future status of Kosovo and Metohija, which will represent the interests of the Serbian people and state.

3. In addition to fundamental interest in the institutional, legal and property protection of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, the Church is also vitally interested in the long-term protection of her holy shrines: monasteries, churches, property and cultural patrimony. For centuries, these Holy Shrines have been and remain the faithful guardians and witnesses of the spiritual and cultural identity of the Serbian people in the Province and as such they must be preserved for the future by being given a special position (status) within the framework of the future, comprehensive solution for Kosovo and Metohija. It is important to protect specific Holy Sites not only as cultural and religious monuments but also as living communities of a living people.

4. In cooperation with relevant experts, during the talks it is necessary to define concrete models that would ensure the Serbian Orthodox Church, whose spiritual seat is the Pec Patriarchate, and its local Diocese of Raska-Prizren and Kosovo-Metohija with full internal autonomy, free pastoral and missionary work with its faithful, protection of property and other rights, protection of proper names and identity, and unobstructed communication with the

canonic and administrative seat of the SOC in Belgrade. In this respect, it is very important that within the future Law on Religious Freedoms in Kosovo and Metohija the SOC is provided with full rights in accordance with the UN Charter and other relevant international acts on the protection of human and religious rights and freedoms.

15. It is also necessary to ensure special, internationally guaranteed status and models for lasting protection of the living Serbian Orthodox monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija by creating appropriate protective zones around monasteries, with the presence of international military forces wherever and for as long as necessary. In addition to the protective zones, it is necessary to provide special guarantees for the free, spiritually and physically unobstructed life and work of monastic communities, unhindered access for the faithful and for pilgrims, as well as appropriate customs, tax and other benefits enabling the economic sustenance of these communities, which support themselves by their work. The form and scope of protective zones would depend on their significance and on the fact whether a monastery is located in a part of the Province inhabited by an Albanian or a Serbian majority.

16. The complete arrangement for protection of institutions, sites and patrimony of the Serbian Orthodox Church should be under the special monitoring of the International Community, in full coordination with the Government of Serbia, Kosovo provincial institutions and UNESCO, which would ensure the sustainability of protective mechanisms within the framework of the international civil presence in Kosovo. This institution would concern itself with current issues and arbitration in the event agreed-upon principles are not honored. It would maintain ties with international factors, police and municipal authorities. Participation in this process should include appropriate experts from Belgrade and Pristina and experts of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as representatives of the International Community.

17. At the same time, in accordance with Resolution 1244, Annex 2, Item 6, it is necessary to enable the unobstructed engagement of experts of the Ministry of Culture from Belgrade and the Serbian Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, who have already worked on the protection of Serbian spiritual, cultural and historical patrimony in Kosovo and Metohija in the past, and who possess complete documentation and specialized experience. The engagement of experts from Belgrade would also be realized in cooperation with representatives of local Kosovo institutions under the unique auspices of the EU. The eventual transfer of jurisdiction over the SOC cultural patrimony in Kosovo and Metohija to Kosovo institutions is unacceptable because the local Kosovo Ministry of Culture lacks the expertise for this jurisdiction and is inadequate to guarantee and ensure the protection of the identity and purpose of these Holy Shrines.

18. The resolution of the future status of Kosovo and Metohija should enable the complete restoration of all Orthodox churches and monasteries that have been destroyed or damaged since 1999, their return into liturgical function, the full protection for the property of the SOC, as well as special guarantees intended to make it possible for the SOC and other religious communities to ensure the restitution of property illegally confiscated after World War II in accordance with special legislation to be passed in accordance with European standards.

19. The resolution of the future status of Kosovo and Metohija should include special provisions protecting the identity, the historical and spiritual origin and the patrimony of the Serbian people. Even though our patrimony is physically located in Kosovo and Metohija, nevertheless it cannot be called the cultural patrimony of Kosovo but the Serbian cultural patrimony of Kosovo and Metohija (just as there is Albanian, Roma and Ottoman patrimony in Kosovo and Metohija). The imposition of a collective identity to this cultural patrimony represents a threat to the survival of Serbian cultural patrimony and to our people as a whole, as well as a change in the identity of Christian civilization in the Province.

10. The views of the Serbian Orthodox Church are completely complementary with the Plan of the Government of Serbia for Kosovo and Metohija, and with the most recent plan of President Tadic regarding the two-entity reorganization of the Province as a part of Serbia. The SOC Holy Synod of Bishops has taken the view at its most recent session in November 2005 that the issue of the future status of the Province must be resolved in accordance with international principles on the inviolability of sovereignty and integrity of democratic states, including Serbia and Montenegro. The future solution for Kosovo and Metohija must take into account the interests of all citizens which live there and must be such that it does not destabilize

the situation in the region, which after years of war and suffering needs peace, reconciliation, cooperation, spiritual, moral, economic and all other forms of progress.

END TEXT.

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